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IS REALITY A MISTAKE?

Paradoxical *o* objects *&* Aporetic *s* situations
and

Martin Alexandre Alonso Iglesias

“Is Reality a Mistake? Paradoxical Objects & Aporetic Situations”

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Is reality a MISTAKE?

Introduction:

Oscar Wilde - Irony: ^{Humour} Considering Judging Blaming nature inferior to art → Value western thought
 Awareness feeling my body, my hair water
 Am I doing something about it, no -- Peter Fend

Madness protection from stupidity

Proust unemployed

Position observing

Plato's Cave

Language speaking ← Hallucination

Real ↔ Appearance

"A reflection of how language itself works irrespective of the intentions of any particular user"

Dissociation of Representation

Pilgrimage, Failure, Shortcut

Confession "I'm dying and I'm useless" (Proust)

Fillian Chair

Corruption

Caray Young

Artand IMAGE PROSOPHAIERS INSINCERE

Shortcut

The mad voice → unconscious mind

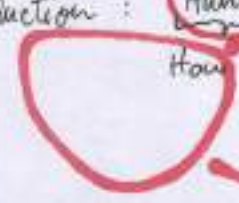
Dissatisfaction

Surrealism: source of artistic truth

Inconformity

Introduction:

Humour as an assistant to digest can help as antidote for with what? ... !?



How: Mirage / Appearance / Hallucination
 As counterpoint to facts, phenomenal reality, Truth (accuracy)
 Relativise Truth - Fake

Ambiguity CANON CYNICISM DANIEL KELLER Peter Fend

Razor Blade representation
 Autonomy vs Dependency

Signific (useful) meaning (useless) Representation

Proust

- Confession vs Inimicinity
- Language nothing: irrespective of intention of user
- Failure
- Purity - Corruption
- Pilgrimage shortcut
- Caray Young

Horror

• An object near-lost stable canon
 ↓
 Depends on use

Phidias
 Praxiteles
 Helenism

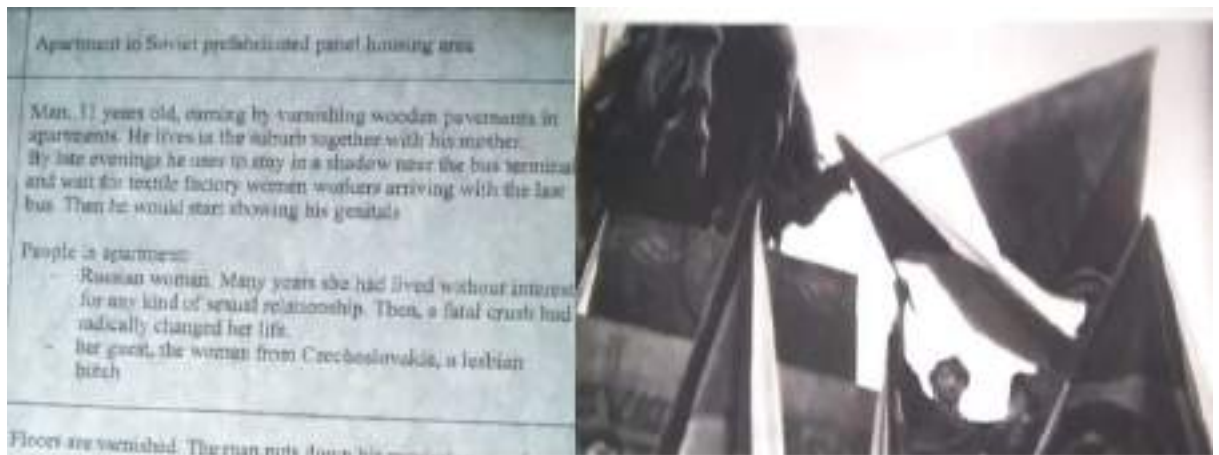
INTRODUCTION

It is said that reality is the state or quality of being real; in distinction from mere -false- appearance. When I argue that reality is a mistake, I am not trying to postulate how it should be. The boundaries that make us distinguish one thing from another and help us navigate through everyday life, the kind of stuff we take for granted, is what I try to subvert in my artistic practice. Reconfiguring (the) daily relations between bodies, objects and surroundings, I seek to convey an immersive quality that disrupts the logical thought stream. This line of visual work lead to the research on the themes of deconstruction and sabotage. Both notions reflect the intention of resisting a prevailing order.

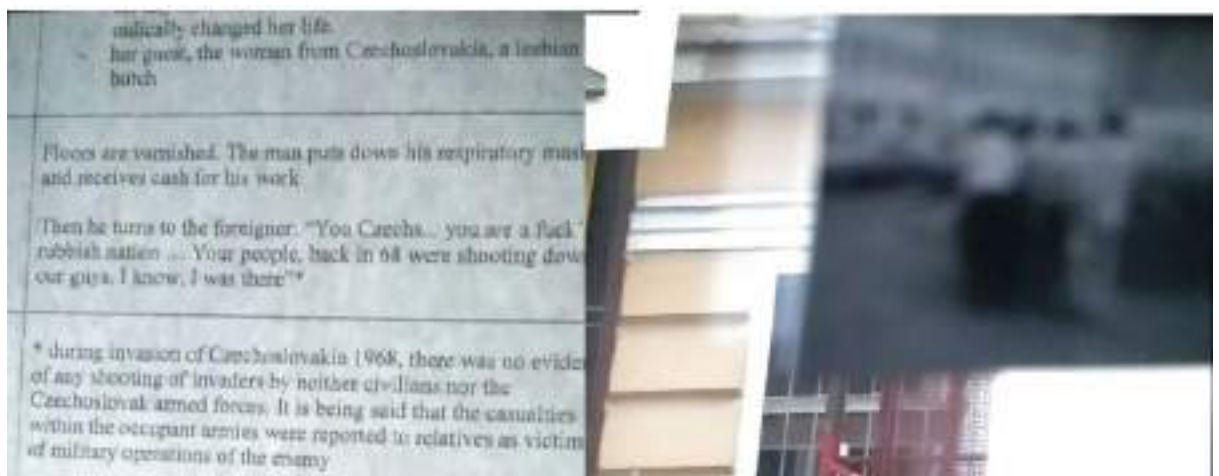
In the past I have conceived devices performing the task of an antidote. These works seek to elicit the experience of contradiction, like the virtual reality glasses that make you see only what is right behind of you or a box that falls when a door is opened. I label these kind of works as paradoxical objects. Sometimes, unintentionally, the device does not succeed to perform the function I intended, and it remains an object. In this moment I realize my intentions were a mirage, and the reality evidences a failure. At this bifurcation my dilemma is whether I should consider the result a try out, and start all over again and aim for the intended thesis, or to embrace the defects and cheating on the plan. This is the aporetic situation: the impossibility to decide with the space and time inhabited by doubt. The etymology of aporia comes from the ancient Greek language where “A-” is the negation of; and “Poros” which stands for convenience. This term will stand in the following research as a position of struggle.

An assumption is that the artistic gesture is articulated deliberately. During my efforts to make art, I have made -besides the work itself- a banal action and later I realized that this unintentional gesture was a carrier of more artistic potential -in my case- and clear self expression.¹ I am very attracted to situations when expectations are deviated. This made me realize that the underlying subject of my research is uncertainty: uncertainty about the control I have over my work and to what extent this lack of control is intentional, uncertainty about having to decide what to do when the plan has failed, and uncertainty about immersing an audience and/or myself into a state of confusion for the sake of dismantling a questionable structure. I am going to be analysing and reflecting upon a series of so-called “theoretical objects” that will guide me through different entry points to the topic of uncertainty and hopefully these paths will meet or collide somewhere.

¹ I met this guy in Germany, and he was also an artist. We wrote down for each other, our own websites on a napkin. A couple of weeks after, at the risk of throwing away that piece of information, I checked out this guy’s website. I liked his sculptures to the point of feeling jealous. I got accidentally distracted and started masturbating a few moments after. I unintentionally cleaned my cum with that napkin and thought afterwards that it was kind of an interesting outcome to the feeling of inferiority.



Aberrations are -if not desired- at least a key to my practice. They are the differences between an expectation and a failure. The work of Anna Daucikova *33 situations* deconstructs an expectation by filming a text that describes a situation and then moves the camera onto an image. I couldn't avoid -unsuccessfully- trying to look for coherent relations between the text and image.



Daucikova, *Situations*, two video stills from different moments put one next to the other. Due to its illustrative relation to the text, this image will be an exception in comparison to the rest of the visuals within the following body of text. Images will be manipulated and selected as a means to complement, contradict, and at times interrupt the line of argument; as if the space provided by the caption (the text underlying an image) will be used as a different kind of writing, a different voice, one whose departure point is vision.

Note about the writing style:

Mindmaps have played an important role in my research process and have helped to articulate a large part of my writing. In the same way that I draw connections between the ideas in these mindmaps, it becomes harder to see the connections or the reason why I so eagerly made the initial associations. I think my mental constructions are ephemeral— as if the simple act of writing down what that rapport between the concepts is, would make the vision disappear. Afterwards, when moving through this mess of mindmaps, I feel like I am

walking through the withered memories of the night in the midst of a hangover. Red circles around words of black swim in and out of vision as arrows jump from and attach to these orphaned stanzas and paragraphs, in the hopes of making a connection, a union of ideas and themes. When I am looking for instructions on what and how to write, in truth it all becomes undecipherable “morning after” hodgepodge of disjointed memories.

Mindmaps are the trace of a struggle to choose between enjoying the vision or putting it down onto words (so as to not lose it). Both options exclude each other; namely, that the joy experienced through vision is only troubled by the fear that the object of contemplation might suddenly vanish. The joy comes -in my case- from the vision of something I haven't seen before. Fearing not being able to see it again stems from the reason that I do not know how I reached a specific conclusion. Writing down the mindmap thus becomes an act of plotting points in space -with keywords- so as to connect them later and pave the road and make it possible to return to it.

A mindmap is a faster way than writing when it comes to sketch a body of thought. Instead of linearly writing, keywords are penned down in order to immortalise the view and spend the least amount of time possible looking at the blank sheet of paper. In fact, each time I look back from the paper into the vision, this one has changed! For instance the need of becoming more specific so as to make a reliable representation of it, would not only deform the copy, but the original too! My inspired thoughts seem to be only compatible with a cryptic trace of scribbles. As soon as I start considering the survival of the train of thought, and involve clarity as a factor, these capricious visual effects that seem to have a life of their own, go away. The following body of text is articulated through mindmaps, which bluntly speaking they are just a metaphor standing for hybrid entities: half enchanted experience and half the effort to immortalise the experience. Thus the writing have been motivated by a pseudo-archaeological exercise where I have tried to make sense out of these signs. Rather than being undecipherable, they are incongruent, meaning that when looking back at these mindmaps, they are not completely alien to me, I find parts of bodies of thought I can relate to, but the traces indicate divergent directions.

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 - The Paradoxical Object
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 - Slaves and Prisoners
- **Why then, Poets in Times of Misery? Conclusion.**

1: - Introduction → Humour antibiotic for incoherence / digest assist ethical digestion

- **Protest** → You might not understand your own joke

- Appearance of conveying a meaning → Pilgrimage, expression of grief in Balbec
- Representation

UNDETERMINED
ASSEMBLAGE
ANONYMOUS ENTITY?

Razor Blade

an introduction to uncertainty
 • function, displacement → design / MEXICAN REDUCTION
 • Assamblage, entity or such? → Don't look at the difference between the blades and the glinder

Instability

Felix Glet. Torres

- Cut, scar → Sequence, Satellital vessels of memory
- Blade → Blending of two different bodies
- Physicality vs Representation
Myth Sleeping Hermaphrodites

(AVOIDING?)
Critical choice

Conjoined twins
Interviews?

The potential in failure

Metaphorical understanding of the art; displacement of fact.

~~Representation~~
- **Attronir**

- Continues with
- Physicality vs Representation

Creation of an image



Protest
Michelangelo

Anecdotic, vernacular vs CANON
 Alterations
 Immutability

Walter Dill
Mirage
Lack of physicality

- Misinterpretation

Abrated representation
 Inverted pyramid
 Instable Manzoni

Michelangelo
Slaves

Seeing where your eyes cannot

THE MATH VOICE

Deceit: Emancipated representation:

Courbet, 7 year
 of activity in study
 Painting - Inst. Nation
 of objects

VISUAL META-LEVEL
 SEQUENCE
 GIMMICKY, INCONSISTENT
 QUOTES/ENTITIES
 (COPIES?)
 OBJECTS WITH LACK OF VALUE
 DESPITE SIGNIFICANT ACCIDENTS

Like writing a beautiful sentence and forgetting to acknowledge give credit to its author by making for that someone else wrote it, and reader you fail to provide your reader with a footnote that gives credit to the author, keeping all the for you.

Regardless of the intention, hidden properties are revealed
Magical devices, functional and art are intertwined

Part I: Irony as Antidote

“Limits of truth can certainly be understood as the fact that the truth is precisely limited, finite and confined within its border. In

sum, the truth is not everything, one would then say, for there is more, something else or something better: truth is finite. Or worse: truth, is finished.”

Jacques Derrida 'Aporias'



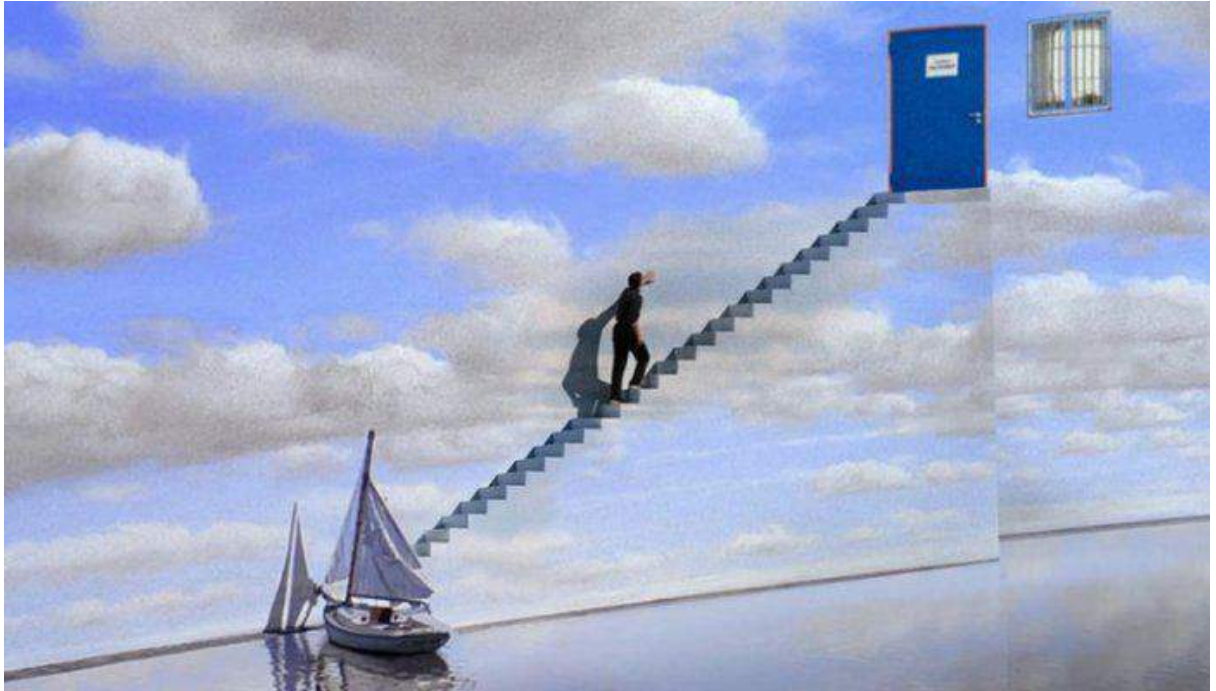
Still image from a chapter in the American sitcom The Simpsons created by Matt Groening in 1989 and still ongoing nowadays.



Piero Manzoni, "Base of the World, Magic Base No. 3", iron and bronze, 82 x 100 x 100 cm, 1961.

What is Reality?

Can irony act as an antidote for reality? First I consider it necessary to narrow down what I am referring to by reality. In the mathematical field, there are a series of figures that appear while dealing with the notion of eternity and the process of limitation, both of them being thinking tools used to find out what the term reality actually stands for. In order to determine what reality is, we need to know where it starts and where it ends. I can say bluntly that reality is the conglomerate of existing facts. Now, the friction between the terms limitation and eternity arises, giving place to paradoxes, fallacies and sophisms. All three have in common the fact that they are an unexpected result to a calculation. What differences they have from one another is the degree of accuracy in defining phenomena. This brings us to the problem concerning the knowledge about the medium chosen for explaining facts. Paradoxes relate to mystery. They are correct, for they escape the expectations prior to the analysis, but the calculation does not contradict any structuring principle of the chosen medium. Fallacies relate to ignorance. The observer is unaware that he or she is not obeying the laws governing the medium; after the surprise, the status of the discovery is verified, the observer goes through the entire calculation without being able to notice where or what the mistake is. Sophisms relate to trickery. As fallacies, they are also incorrect formulations, but they are used deliberately to fool others, coming across as true to those who don't have the knowledge or the patience to evaluate the statement critically.



Film still from *The Truman Show* directed by Peter Weir, 1998.

The text that follows is a logical inquiry to find out if irony has the potential of acting like an antidote to reality, or if it just behaves like anaesthesia. My lack of in-depth knowledge about the laws governing logical reasoning might cause the predictable or celebrated discoveries to follow, to be rendered false. In fact these potential errors during the argument can be convenient if we bare in mind that what is at stake here is not the pursuit of truth per se, but the sabotage of a spectrum of reality dominated by a cloud of constraint and alienation. Instead of using logic as it is normally prescribed to us: as the means to find reasonable conclusions or efficient solutions to problems; let me consider logic here and now as a mechanism in itself, against its own -programmed- nature. Seeking what the limits of logic were theorist Immanuel Kant postulated in *Critique of Pure Reason* that logic is not reliable when it comes to examine ontological truths, since it is possible to prove by the means of reasoning in two opposite statements -in Kant's case- that god does and does not exist. Following this argument Hans Vaihinger stated that since these metaphysical truths cannot be discovered, one should ask whether it is useful or even necessary to act "as if" they were true.² Perhaps using logic "as if" it will lead us towards a better place, or simply towards a safer place when the need of food and shelter becomes urgent, can contribute in the long term to finding yourself in the following situation: where you need to work in order to survive but you dislike the labour you are doing, and how this labour contributes to the current state of affairs, but you have no time and energy to get out of the spiral. The dependence on patterns of habit, collectively sculpts the alienated realm I was referring to before, to which -I propose- an aesthetic use of logic can become disruptive:

² Hans Vaihinger, *The Philosophy of 'As if' A System of the Theoretical, Practical and Religious Fictions of Mankind*, trans. C. K. Ogden (London: Routledge, 1968)



Filliou Robert *The Seat of Ideas*, metal, string and ink on cardboard, 1976.

An Aesthetic Use of Logic

The Seat of Ideas stands for certain entities whose perception require a temporal sequence, a first moment that starts with recognition. For instance in the image pictured above, the frame of a chair -the signifier- generates in the mind of the viewer the completion of what is supposed to follow; namely, for the viewer to sit down. As we come closer we realize that in fact, the object escapes our built anticipation and in fact is not possible to sit on the chair. By the same token, Oscar Wilde camouflages absurdity in his essay, *The Decay of Lying* through the use of apparently logical arguments (sophisms).³ Certain formats like official discourse, opinion articles in newspapers or philosophical essays, unintentionally evoke a relationship of mutual trust between the writer and reader. A reader can have a critical attitude towards a text, but it is not frequent that a reader thinks that the writer does not stand behind his or her own words. Am I wrong? Included below is an excerpt from Wilde's text:

CYRIL (coming in through the open window from the terrace). My dear Vivian, don't coop yourself up all day in the library. It is a perfectly lovely afternoon. The air is exquisite. There is a mist upon the woods like the purple bloom upon a plum. Let us go and lie on the grass, and smoke cigarettes, and enjoy Nature.

VIVIAN Enjoy Nature! I am glad to say that I have entirely lost that faculty. People tell us that Art makes us love Nature more than we loved her before; that it reveals her secrets to us; and that after a careful study of Corot and Constable we see things in her that had

³ Oscar Wilde, *The Decay of Lying - An Observation*, In: *Intentions* ed. David Price (New York: Prometheus Books, 2004) p. >56

escaped our observation. My own experience is that the more we study Art, the less we care for Nature.

What Art really reveals to us is Nature's lack of design, her curious crudities, her extraordinary monotony, her absolutely unfinished condition. Nature has good intentions, of course, but, as Aristotle once said, she cannot carry them out. When I look at a landscape I cannot help seeing all its defects. It is fortunate for us, however, that Nature is so imperfect, as otherwise we should have had no art at all. Art is our spirited protest, our gallant attempt to teach Nature her proper place. As for the infinite variety of Nature, that is a pure myth. It is not to be found in Nature herself. It resides in the imagination, or fancy, or cultivated blindness of the man who looks at her.

CYRIL Well, you need not look at the landscape. You can lie on the grass and smoke and talk.

VIVIAN But Nature is so uncomfortable. Grass is hard and dumpy and damp, and full of dreadful black insects. Why, even Morris' poorest workman could make you a more comfortable seat than the whole of Nature can.⁴

Besides humoristic, Wilde's operation is a subversive one— he infiltrates the forms of official discourse with illusive constructs that mimic the mechanisms of logic. Well-articulated reasoning catches the reader's attention, with the intention of conducting the stream of thought away from any of the expected trajectories paved by habit. These deviated destinations act like *trompe l'oeil* thoughts where an illusory space is suggested beyond a flat surface. The success or failure of this subversive strategy is ambiguous but it opens up a debate. On the one hand, the ineffectiveness of the text is obvious, when it comes to measure its capacity to transform the alienating status quo. But on the other hand, the strength of this text is that the sabotage is not noticeable; it is a weak one yes, but perhaps it is part of a silent or invisible revolution. To me, what matters is that in this spectrum of reality dominated by constraint, the inhabitants are exposed to a repetitive sequence of experiences and within this pattern, a camouflaged -polluting- antidote has been introduced. What is at stake is not the transformation of external phenomena, but the corruption of the organ itself where experience is finally distilled— the awakening of the reader's ironical faculties.

When you're being ironic, you don't say directly what you think, you leave space for the listener: like a puzzle, you purvey a -seemingly- incongruent group of pieces. It is possible that the mosaic-kind-of-image that the pieces form all together in a unique combination remains unnoticed. "When you are an artist, it is important that people talk about you, even if they do so in a good way". Irony functions like a code, where the real message is hidden and needs to be deciphered. In this way it can be used as a means of resistance creating a "we" that corresponds with patterns of behaviour, like for instance only if you engage with "this apparent nonsense", you might understand it. The opacity of its meaning can certainly provoke irritation, and worst of all there is a big risk of troubling communication by

⁴ Wilde, *Lyling*, p.4.

generating misunderstandings: where someone thinks that someone else is being ironic and is not the case, or when someone incurs into the rewardless exercise of looking for sense where there is none. To be honest there is nothing as shameful as badly formulated irony. But let us come back to the very reason why irony was introduced in this query; to find out if it did act as anaesthesia or as an antidote for the feeling of alienation.⁵ This kind of humour does have an anaesthetic effect that manifests through the eruption of laughter that later on fades away. Unlike entertainment, where the pain produced by the routine is put aside -so as to make it possible to keep on going- or either a reconciliation with the forms of alienation is proposed, irony is rooted in pessimistic thinking. The core of pessimism lies in acknowledging that existence is marked by the urge to satisfy a constant and expanding deficiency of every kind, thus life is characterized by suffering; namely, when one of the needs or desires is satisfied, immediately another goal emerges.⁶ We can observe how both irony and pessimism are about giving up and being resigned to the fact that death will come and after that nothing else, as opposed to letting oneself be dragged in life into an endless stream of illusions such as religion, life plans, and holidays. These obligations help to build expectations of some kind, and expectations sooner or later lead towards disappointment. There are monsters that survive pessimism though, they are the target of the ironic comment, which is in itself a serious joke. Embracing that death is inescapable does not exclude the fear that comes with this realization. Thus, in my opinion, when Wilde is rendering nature as ridiculous, “Nature is so imperfect, as otherwise we should have had no art at all. Art is our spirited protest”, he is looking for a fictional blindspot to mortality.⁷ Judging nature -mountains or mere trees that live for a longer period than human beings- with the criteria used and made by humans is his ironic strategy (a fallacy) to prove for a moment the mirage of our victory. Sometimes stating the obvious helps. Now I do not think Wilde is standing behind his words here, but rather claiming the agency of these mental images disproving any truth applied to reality. To me, they are hinting at a paradigm shift where the experience of the human being is stressed above the so-called external phenomena, as the nucleus of a contingent revolution. An example of what the ironic behaviour entails -culturally speaking- could be represented by what Duchamp said about people deliberately attending Happenings; namely that they are not amused but incur a certain play of boredom.⁸

⁵ query: a question, especially one expressing doubt, uncertainty or an objection. Collins dictionary.

⁶ Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, article on Arthur Schopenhauer, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/schopenh/#SH2b> (accessed 1 June 2017).

⁷ Wilde, *Lying*, p.4.

⁸ Marcel Duchamp referring to the work of Allan Kaprow, interview BBC 1968 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bwk7wEdC76Y> (accessed 23 September 2017).



Carey Young, *Product Recall*, film still, 2007. In the video piece, the artist stages a visit to the psychiatrist, she, herself embodying the patient. Instead of starting a discussion, there is an unusual structure where the shrink enunciates slogans from technology-based multinationals such as “life’s good”, “think different”, and then she guesses “LG”, “Apple”. Gradually as the video goes on, she fails more and more, until she just admits to not know, anymore. Her decreasing level of response over time, is inversely proportional to the accelerationism that comes with technological proliferation of the recent period. This work, apart from criticizing how these companies colonise the unconscious minds of citizens, coming across as embodiments of progress; it succeeds to undermine the code by which we read this image, which is, as: (vertical) the owner of knowledge -the psychiatrist- thus empowered with the authority to assist and guide the patient (horizontal position). The patient is implicitly regarded as an individual with a problem, the carrier of something that needs to be fixed. But, the placing of the carpet in the right of the composition -just at the feet of the patient- I consider, it disrupts the assumption that the role of asking the questions is associated with being acquainted with knowledge; and answering being rendered as a position of inferiority because it obeys to the demands of the psychiatrist. The carpet at the feet of the artist, hypothetically hints at the inversion of this paradigm where the seeming doubt and innocence by which Young answers, can just act as an illusive behaviour of conformity in order to succeed in the depiction of the image.

Declaration of madness: Thoughts on not being able to control yourself and commit delirious aggressions to people, especially to those who you want to have a pleasant time with. It is scary to realize your madness but talking to someone about it, might save someone’s physical integrity (including mine) plus avoid -some of- the mental pain on the way.

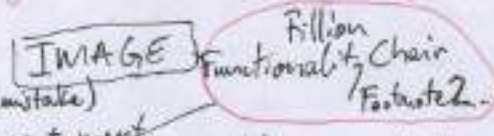
Re-Reading the text

Reality: the quality or state of being real in distinction from mere false appearance.

Oscar Wilde "The Decay of Lying" Example of the chair → nature has good intentions but is unable to carry them out
 Ruskin, Proust → Confusing the aesthetic and the spiritual
DESIGNING: PAINT WITH REPRESENTATION

Reality is a mistake:

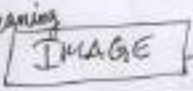
To any reader: it shouldn't be (a mistake)
 Everything should've been just fine. ^{statement}
 But it's not. Satisfaction is horroristic ← Wilde
 a mirage. But if we complain to much we are in a risk becoming spoiled kids because there is always someone who is worse than we are.



EPHEMERAL Contingence vs. Nature human

Anthropocentrism
 Seemingly true: Illusion
 Nature can't produce as good comfortable a seat as any artisan.

Difference between text and meaning
 signifier and meaning
 Recognisable shape and function.
 Subtext function: Siege des idées



- Judging nature by parameters an asset of parameters that only concern the human being. → (artificial) needs to be To sit down
 - Proofs nature inferior to the human being against all odds/ what is commonly understood.

Evoke the unexpected

USE OF KNOWLEDGE - TECHNOLOGY Irony

Perhaps nowadays is harder to understand perceive the presence of the human as insignificant:

The nature of this text being a scholar articulation of my banal wonders
 Awareness → SYSTEMS OF SURVIVAL + PETER FEND → Ecological → Ethical failure → Humanitarianism → Poetic compositioning → Milly and niches

After knowledge → Comfort in nature
Habit → Aporia
 Proust unemployed shame → Mirage
Epiphany

Can I do something about it? No
 Observing how in my homeland it rains less and I'm chasing showers so refusing to cut my hair
 Insignificance marking besides nature
 Realising how my existence contributes to its decay
 Quit → (anticipate) Irony: ~~blaming~~ judging

Part II: The Decay of the Antidote

Redemption: 1) (Christianity) the act of delivering from sin or saving from evil. 2) Repayment of the principal amount of a debt. 3) The act of purchasing back something previously sold.

Webster dictionary

“The stars are the diamonds of the poor.”
In the film *Caravaggio* by Derek Jarman (1986)

Between Fantasy and Madness

On the other side of the coin of irony, there is the quest for the miraculous. Refusing to give up, this way of proceeding tries to escape “the deadening tyranny of habit” seeking to put everything into place according to its intentions. So what are the intentions then? I chose to open up this section with the novel by Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*. The author conceived his work as a threshold -through a very generous and demanding use of the pronoun “I”- to transport both the reader and himself into the memories of his life.⁹ The digressive writing style acts as a rite of initiation which must be undertaken in order to enjoy the epiphanies contained in the book. Christopher Prendergast wonders in his text, *Mirages and Mad Beliefs: Proust the Skeptic* if Proust’s prolonged meditations indulging between his remorseful memories, fictionalized situations and art historic-philosophical observations; are not just tiresome.¹⁰ I completely disagree, yes this reading exercise can result wearing and time consuming, but it compensates patience with the unexpected connexion between these apparently loose elements in the novel: that I just referred to above, as epiphanies. Consider the current taste for cultural products that deliver their content as fast as possible and whose driving force is to keep up the spectator’s attention -for commercial purposes- through the strategic use of sex and violence. As a result, reading Proust becomes a political act. His disjointed writing style resembles the bumpy dynamic of our mind when we are not doing anything in particular, thus we become acquainted with the life of the author as if we experienced it ourselves.

⁹ Roland Barthes, *La Préparation du Roman*, Le Magazine Littéraire, 144:1979

¹⁰ Christopher Prendergast, *Mirages and Mad Beliefs: Proust the Skeptic* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press 2013).



Film still from the documentary *Forrest Bess: The Key to the Riddle* (1999) depicting the Australian Aboriginals' image making. The American painter Forrest Bess (1911-1977) was inspired by the Aboriginals notion of the Hermaphrodite, as a rite to reach immortality: a cut was performed in the male sexual area underneath the penis -at the exact location of the urethra- to open a threshold for penetration; and by such operation, the individual sacrifices his fertility to become immortal.¹¹ As we'll observe further on, this idea resonates with Borges's quote in *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis, Tertius* "mirrors and copulation are abominable because they increase the number of men", and Proust's redemptive use of the pronoun in first person singular. All three seem to go against the scientific method, as if the knowledge reached through the making of distinctions during the observation of phenomena; would fragment reality; as if virtue relied in unification. Like the Hinduist notion of Brahman which stands for a liberation of the self and becoming one with everything else.¹² Or the hebrew Aleph which is the first letter in the alphabet and the number one. Borges wrote a short story with the same title in which he describes a point in the universe that contains all the rest, and by observing it, all the points in the globe could be observed, at once, simultaneously. But coming back to the Australian Aboriginals and the paintings of Forrest Bess, what is at stake is not only an understanding of the Universe through the use of symbols; but a sabotage of the laws of Nature by which every living organism is condemned to die. And through this manipulation of fate, try to establish a balance, a sacred operation of harmony.

The mission of Proust's writing is redemptive, like alchemy, because it seeks to transform the body of text into a vehicle where is possible to inhabit again the places, but

¹¹ Herbert Basedow, "Subincision and Kindred Rites of the Australian Aboriginal", *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 57:1927, p.123.

¹² Brihadāranyaka Upanishad 1.4.10, trans. Eduard Roer, ebook https://archive.org/details/The_Brihad_aranyaka_upanishad_Sankarabhashya_English (accessed March 10th 2018).

also the moments and encounter the characters have Proust's motivation to write was the sheer expression of grief. In this way the text is -partly- created with the mentality of an alchemist, with the aim to create the elixir of immortality for his particular universe. The search of the impossible here, lies in making the book a vessel for the reader and not just for the writer. A consequence of this in Proust's writing is that he demands for the reader to look beyond the limits of what can be understood. The narrator declares to have been reading a book and at some point he realizes that the book is referring to him. Suddenly the narrator becomes everything: the book itself, a music quartet, as well as the rivalry between the kings Francis Ist and Charles the Vth.¹³ In my opinion, this requirement to access the text suspending the limits of logic, acts here as the means to transport the reader towards mental adventures; like the surrealists will consider years later, the unconscious regions of the mind as the source of artistic truth.



Ídem.

Consequently, the withdrawal of the commonsensical faculties can also render the reader's sensitivity more vulnerable. I wonder why, in Proust's quest to recover lost time, as in the writings of the alchemists -where signs need to be deciphered- both are elaborated in such cryptic forms; as if the pursuit of impossible goals didn't rely on the veracity or visible success of the campaign, but in the acquaintance with an opaque knowledge that internally motivates the perseverance of the pilgrimage. What if Proust's hermetic writing style is a persuasive strategy to fool the reader? Like the process of being convinced so as to end up

¹³ Marcel Proust, *Du Côté de chez Swann*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1954) p.9.

idolizing a sect leader. According to Prendergast, there are two voices within *In Search of Lost Time*: “[Firstly] a celebratory one that wants to banish all doubt and bring a joy akin to certainty”.¹⁴ This one is more dominant over the entire work and is stressed during observations on art and music.¹⁵ The other voice expresses the confusion about the success and doubts about the reason to be of the entire novel. This other one tends to appear repressed in the margins of the text and “tempers the intensities of the other by reference to the most prosaic of orders; the facts of matter”.¹⁶ To me, it succeeds to immerse the reader, the fact that at times Proust witnessed being haunted by his own work. Now of course the author is dead, so we cannot interview him, but even if he was alive it would be impossible to know if he was actually haunted or not, by his own writings. That dimension of uncertainty, is a territory from where the contingent revolution against the “deadening tyranny of habit” can be commanded.



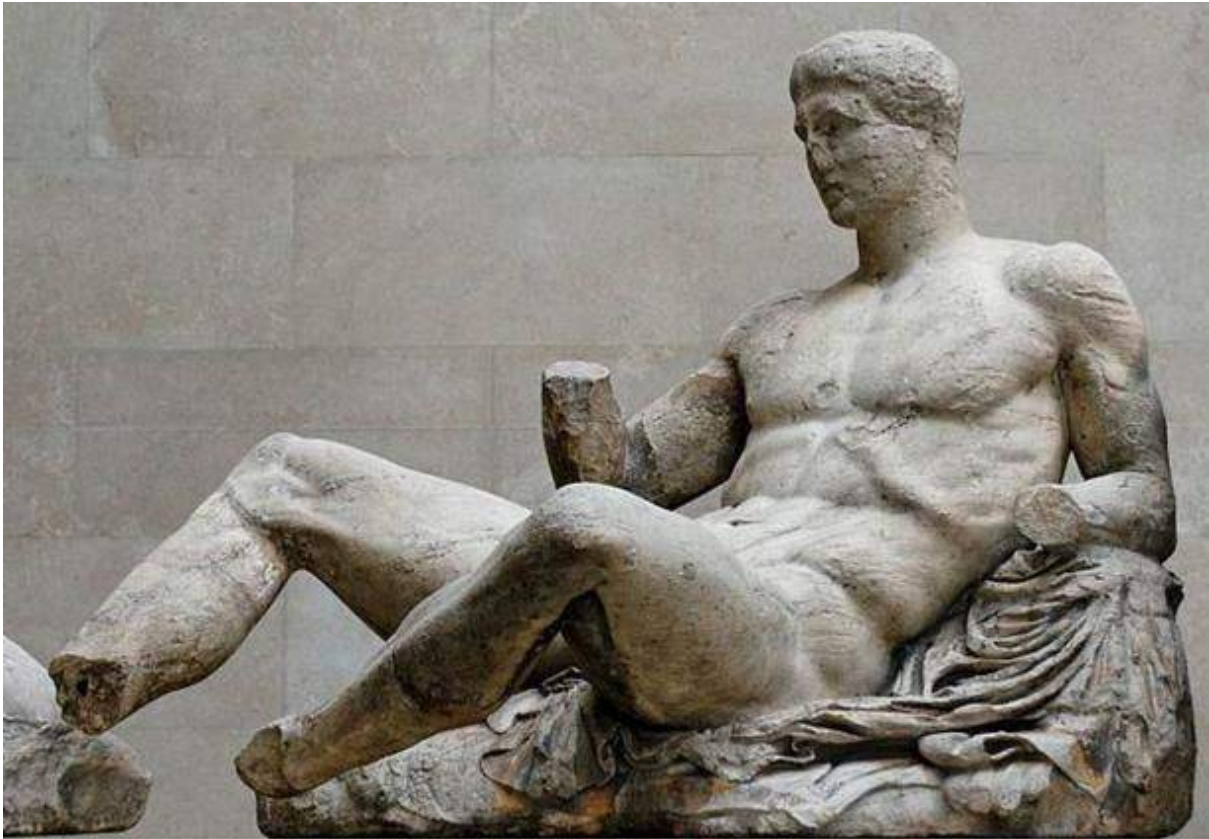
“*Sleeping Hermaphroditus*” is a marble sculpture whose origin is imprecise but it is catalogued in *Louvre* museum as belonging to the period of Ancient Rome. It is said to be a copy of a bronze original made during the Hellenistic period¹⁷. In my opinion this sculpture stands as a crystallization of a paradigm shift in the sculptural canon in the geographical region of Greece. From the classical period (c. 480 – 430 BC) to the Hellenistic period (4th century BC), the representation of the male individual underwent a transition which can be seen in a comparative examination of the works of Phidias and Praxiteles. The *hermaphroditus* in Greek Mythology results from the conjunction of two bodies; thus contains both genders on one single body, thus undermining the validity of the male-female standard categorisation.

¹⁴ Prendergast, *Mirages*, p.7.

¹⁵ Proust, *Swann*, p.250-254.

¹⁶ Prendergast, *Mirages*, p.7.

¹⁷ The original bronze piece is mentioned in *Pliny's Natural History*.



“Reclining Dionysos” Phidias ca.447-433 BC. In the classic Greece, the canon to depict harmoniously the human body, was: the total height of the body was seven times the head.



Praxiteles "*Hermes carrying the infant Dionysos*" ca. 350-330 BC The proportion here is: the total height of the body is eight times the size of the head.

Whether Proust's work was a success or a failure is ambiguous. Deconstructing the standard perimeters of the self, which are manifested through the inclusion of the reader as narrator and the duplication of voices, confuse or amplify the understanding of the "I". This merging of author and reader generates at least externally -due to the investment in time- a political disruption, a disconnection from the surroundings. Internally, the result is opaque: it can alter your state of mind, disappoint you or just do both at different times. At this point I think we find ourselves in another aporetic situation between fantasy and reality. Are there thresholds or are there just deceiving illusions? From this position, acknowledging the agency of writing, I will indulge and expose reality to a magical trope. (Please be patient and keep on reading, an explanation will be provided further on):

1. Losing an object becomes impossible since the very moment you start looking for it, it appears.
2. Finding the object distorts the original size of the object. For instance, after someone lost their car a few times, the vehicle does not fit anymore in the parking spot because the car has increased its length. Or if a building evidences a proportionate distortion, it might be because the construction workers lost -at least once- their measuring tape halfway during the building process.
3. Every exemplar of an item is initially exact to one another; obeying to a particular set of parameters like its size, the material that is made out of, its color, etc.

4. The accuracy of the term “Canon” is sacrificed. Among other definitions “Canon” stands for “[a] general rule or principle”.¹⁸
5. The original parameters of every item are regarded as a canon.
6. When an object is exposed to the unpredictable flow of events it might get lost, stolen or thrown away.
7. Two-dimensional silhouettes were invented for every item so it would always be possible to find out whether an object have been ever lost or if it was an original. But these referents would also get lost eventually.
8. Given their excellent protocols to exclude chance, museums were invented so the authenticity of every exemplar could be verified.
9. The stability or reliability of a canon depends on the amount of exemplars that correspond with those exact parameters. For instance, the exemplar in the museum must be replaced if it does not serve as a referent anymore.
10. If museums did not exist, originals would dissolve within the divergent story of each particular exemplar.

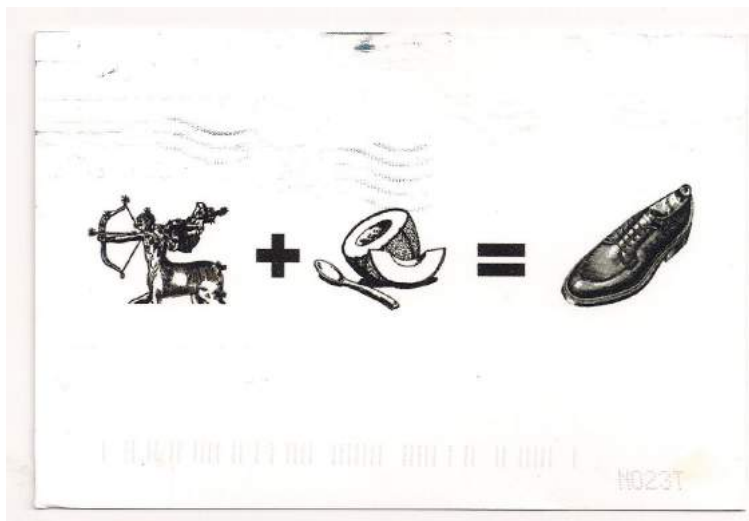


Image corresponding with a google search for the term Pataphysics: which is a concept expressed by the french writer Alfred Jarry in a mock-scientific manner with undertones of spoofing and quackery, in his fictional book *Exploits & Opinions of Doctor Faustroll* in which he riddles and toys with conventional concepts and interpretations of reality.^{19 20 21} The author of this image could not be found, the title is *The Dabblers*.

¹⁸ Collins dictionary

¹⁹ Roger Shattuck “Introduction”. Alfred Jarry *Exploits & Opinions of Doctor Faustroll, Pataphysician* (Boston: Exact Change, 1996) p. ix

²⁰ Spoofing: the act or an instance of impersonating another person; on the internet or via email. Collins dictionary

²¹ Quackery: the activity or methods of a quack. Quack: an unqualified person who claims medical knowledge or other skills. Collins dictionary.



Robert Gober *Untitled Leg (Man coming out of woman)*, Beeswax, hair, sock, cotton, wool, leather. 1989-1990.

The deconstructive strategy, which Jacques Derrida coined ca. 1960, has informed my attitude to approach sources. This is a particular way of looking -mainly- at texts which tries to de-articulate the prevailing dualisms, implicit hierarchies existing and structuring a tradition of Western thought. The deconstructive strategy is a paradoxical operation in itself: “de-” [(latin prefix) meaning reversal, undoing, removing] and “-construction” [(latin verb *construere*) which means to put together the constituent parts (of something) in their proper place and order; this operation seeks to unveil -possible- inherent instabilities, and undecidability in the construction of a text; thus opening alternative understandings of the sources. As I mentioned before, the exposure of sources -or ideal forms, or canons- to the unpredictable flow of events creates distortions. When someone asked me once what was I writing about, I replied -improvising- that it was about objects you lose and whose length increases as they reappear. Talking about what you read involves a process akin to chewing, swallowing, digesting, nurturing and vomiting or any other form of excretion like talking; reducing sources to an anecdote during a daily conversation. As it happened to me, memory tends to simplify and mix the original with personal insights. The magical trope I used before -making ten bullet points- was a failed understanding of the concept *hronir* found in the short story *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis, Tertius* by the argentinian writer J.L.Borges. In my case, I could not fully grasp the concept of the *Hronir* but the lack of understanding didn't stop me from making use of it. Secondly, I realized this aberrated understanding of the original contained some potential in itself: Deconstruction points out that the way signs are perceived, undergoes a constant process of change.

Does the stability of a sign -meaning the preservation of a sign's conventional content versus a transformation of it- rely on the use that is made of it? As we will see in the next

section (The Paradoxical Object) habit and repetition structure to a high extent, the way we relate to the objects in our immediate sphere. For instance the distinction between a copy and an original triggers almost unconsciously a judgement where 'original' means of higher value than 'copy'. But if we bear in mind the deconstructive endeavour we could argue that the dualistic understanding of reality is inherent to the tradition of Western thought, which among other peculiarities is perhaps conditioned by the ideal of private property, thus fostering the predominance of the original over the copy. What I am trying to say is that signs have an implicit set of instructions that not only inform but also prescribe our behavior towards them, generating a kind of automation which obeys directly or indirectly to a set of power relations. The decision to deviate from these paved paths is often seen as a mistake. Yet we could observe before, how pursuing the misinterpretation of what a *hronir* was, proved mistakes to be -potentially- a creative force.



Emilio Moreno, *Heirloom*, 50x70cm C-print belonging to the ensemble of a performance. The artist tells a story where a friend lent him, his dearest object “one he bought to his Mom at the age of twelve with the little treasure of his savings”. Years later, when the loan takes place the mother of his friend has passed away. So he could only borrow it with the promise that the integrity of the sculpture was preserved.



When they met up so his friend could get back his sculpture, there were two exemplars. In one way this is a sad ending because the emotional attachment with the object is subverted by the uncertainty of not knowing which one is the real one. Consolation, or an alternative reading to the ending could be found in the chinese concept *Fuzhipin* in which an exact copy of the original, when is not possible to distinguish between one another, has as much value as the original and no negative connotations.



The *Sleeping Hermaphroditus* view from the back, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

The Paradoxical Object

Paradox: 1) A seemingly absurd or self-contradictory statement that is or may be true.
Collins Dictionary

This object appeared in a movie called *La Collectionneuse (The Collector)* made in 1967 by the french filmmaker Eric Rohmer. It caught my attention because it had a hostile, dangerous shape. But how can an object be hostile by itself? Design has been distinguished from art according to the intention the maker had in mind; and the use that is made of that end product. For instance, razor blades are disposable metal pieces designed for shaving. In that same line of thought it could be possible to argue that a canvas (art) is made in order to be looked at. According to the previous example there seems to be no distinction between art and design, because in both cases, the intentions of the creator and the user are matching: apparently the painting is looked at as much as the blade shaves hairs. But one among many other differences is that it is easier to know when you are done with shaving, than when you are done looking at a painting.

The object that appeared in the film is an assemblage since it consists of razor blades covering the surface of a cylinder. We are assisting a case where a design is sabotaged, where the sharpness contained in the original product has been exaggerated. Now it threatens any hand daring to hold the object. I propose that this manipulation has transformed a group of daily objects into art. Someone could argue that the way a prisoner sharpens a piece of plastic into a knife could also be considered art? A useless object might have a similar relieving effect, in a reality organised on the principle of efficiency than a self-made, clandestine knife might have for a threatened prisoner in a jail with insufficient security. In both cases, there would be a similar way of proceeding; that of transforming a pre-existing piece of the everyday life into an object responding to a subversive, personal request.

I have found an artistic gesture in the shift where the functional qualities of an object -sharpness- have become a dominant feature in this new body, the assemblage. Sharpness has become hazardous, thus suggesting everybody to stay away. Is it not true that not everyone is able to recognise the danger that blades entail, but are either blind or unfamiliar to the signifier shape of a razor blade? The shaving blades and the paint or coffee container (cylinder) when put together have been detached from their origin; from the life and purpose the designer -as a god- had conceived for them. So by becoming an assemblage, their previous functions have been sabotaged to a high extent; they have metamorphosed into a different entity that could be described as autonomous. Opposed to design objects, which exist as bridges from one action to another, this entity protects itself against being used. But if we would use the assemblage -again- for shaving ourselves or for storing coffee or paint in it, or for any other practical purpose, we would be performing a deliberate act of stupidity. Performing daily gestures in a rather inefficient way, on purpose resonates with the artistic strategy I mentioned above: that of withdrawing the usefulness from an utility object. In a way both of them are silent revolts and useless pollutions of habit.

While trying to re-make the assemblage myself, I got -accidentally- cut several times in the process. This is how I discovered that the object emancipates itself from the author. A question concerning the corporeality of the blade: Are scars also part of the blade's body? Like satellite vessels of memory, conscience and/or criticism... The act of cutting opens a threshold where two different spaces merge, on behalf of hemophiliacs, for a limited amount of time.²² The scar becomes a liminal entity where both bodies are blended in, regardless of the responsibility claimed by the victim, and the one assumed by the perpetrator.

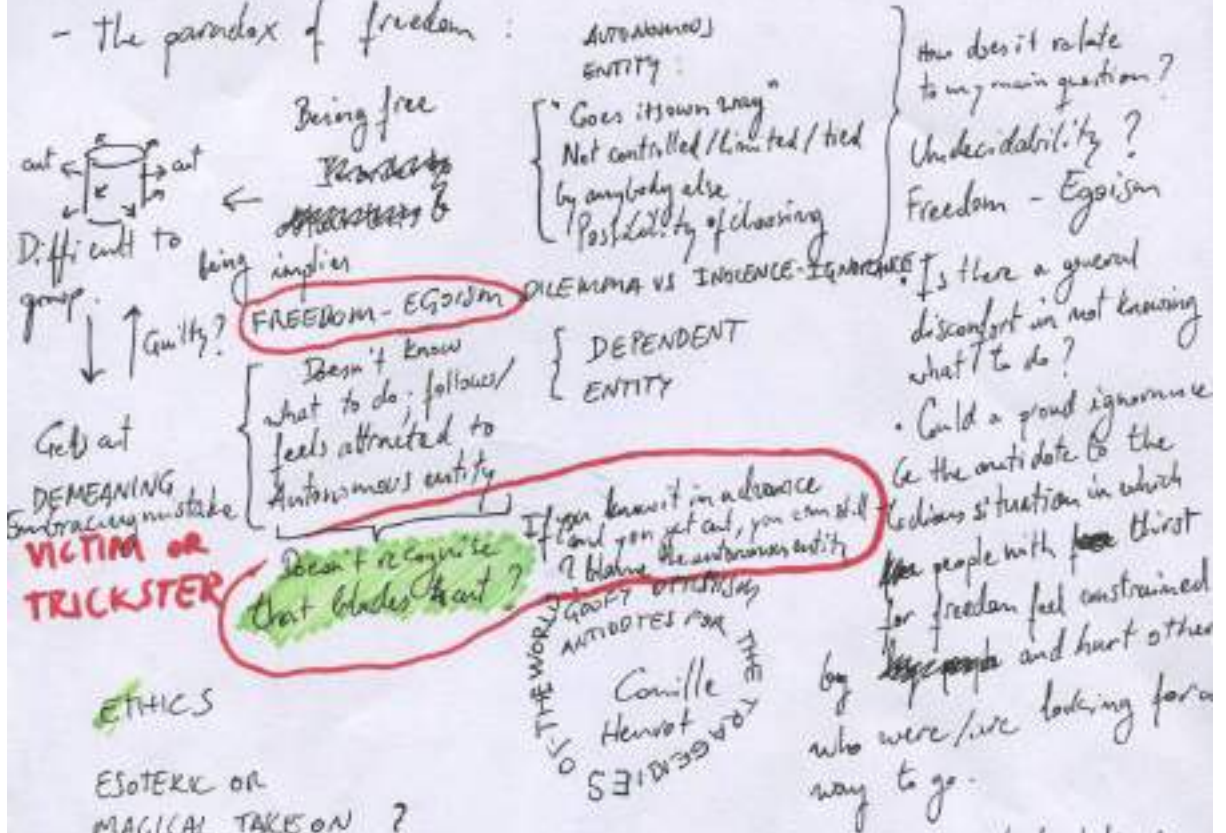
²² Hemophilia is a hereditary disorder, nearly always of males, in which one of the normal blood-clotting factors is deficient, causing serious internal or external hemorrhage from minor cuts and injuries: females with this defective gene are, normally, only carriers. Collins dictionary.

- Write table of contents

- Include Filliam's example of the chair + deconstruction in the text
+ DEVELOP THIS IDEA: A displacement of function APORIA VS DISPLACEMENT
Razor Blade - Pixelated inverted pyramid METAPHOR

- Develop Homer defying the idea of canon → Distinguishing the same "kind of object"
LOST
NOT LOST

- The paradox of freedom:



ETHICS

ESOTERIC OR MAGICAL TAKE ON ?

ETHICAL DILEMMA

~~ETHICAL DILEMMA~~

It's a myth, it's not stopping, imperfect relations
Reality being a mistake
Goofy optimism is not gonna put an end to misunderstandings
is it anaesthesia?

- Start with representation + moral tales



A demonstrator pounded away at the Berlin Wall as East Berlin border guards stood above the Brandenburg Gate on Nov. 11, 1989. Published by The Boston Globe.



Certified piece of the Berlin Wall, sealed and packed for sale as souvenir.
The punchline goes that if the pieces of the Berlin Wall were put together again,
Europe could be divided from North to South.

Part III. Emancipation: Mirage or Hallucination?



Michelangelo Buonarroti, *The Atlas*, ca. 1530-34. Belonging to the series of "Slaves and Prisoners".

Slaves and Prisoners

Would I be biased if I said that at first sight, it is the abstract part of the rock that seems to hold back the anthropomorphic figure? This work is named after the titan *Atlas*, which in greek mythology is an immortal being condemned to hold the sky for eternity. It belongs to a very particular series of works in comparison to the catalogued art history of the Renaissance period and beyond, because of its seemingly unfinished appearance. The legend goes that Michelangelo sculpted this pieces directly in *Cava Colonnata*, the quarry where the remarkable marble of Carrara was and still is extracted from the mountain.

Two reasons animate the tale: to begin with, when the marble is freshly extracted from the quarry, it becomes progressively harder in contact with air. Secondly, the anecdote continues with the blocks of marble inspiring the artist to foresee "figures contained in the block"; probably undergoing the psychological phenomenon of pareidolia, in which the mind responds to a stimulus, by perceiving a familiar pattern where none exists. (The most

common example perhaps, that of recognising shapes in clouds). Let us acknowledge how much the influence of our own database of images allows each one of us -in an almost unconscious process- to see a different thing while observing the same source.²³ Besides these images stored in the mind of the observer; an oscillating degree of intentionality also affects the outcome of the association. For instance, Michelangelo saw human figures during the period of Renaissance; which is defined -following the official manuals of art history- as a paradigm shift named as anthropocentrism, where the human being replaced god at the center of the universe. The artist being a major contributor to this enterprise by being the only agent in charge of producing (public) images at that time.

The presence of a subject's mind during a hallucination, brings along the stigma of insanity, proofed by a so-called absence of external stimulus. Mirages on the other hand, are considered a real optical phenomenon; where light rays are actually refracted to form false image at the observer's location. The classic example being the -coincidentally- inferior images on the desert being mistaken with water. So by trying to blend in the neutral appearance of the mirage and the stigmatized aspect of hallucinations, I am seeking to problematize the normality assigned to Michelangelo's creative process— that of an artist foreseeing human figures in suggestive blocks of marble, sculpting directly in the quarry in order to work faster due to the material's degrading softness; delineating the ephemeral vision upon the stone.

The Atlas conveys, through sculptural work, a dualistic look upon the entire object. A part of the marble is shaped in such a way that it resembles a human figure. This affects perception by splitting that very same thing. The entire object is marble but to the eye of the beholder arises an image with an implicit hierarchy; first the human figure and then the rest of the material. Is it so, that concrete shapes are recognised first, thus being given a prioritized position in comparison to abstract forms? Islamic geometric patterns or Wassily Kandinsky emancipation from representation in the painterly medium, claiming the abstract as such -each one of them for very different reasons- but both would disprove this argument. Let me sharpen my question then: Given the same object, is there a tendency to pose our look -firstly- upon recognisable shapes? Is it possible to admire as such, the abstract that coexists with concrete forms?

The main distinction between a mirage and a hallucination is the presence or absence of external stimulus. When Michelangelo was looking at the freshly extracted blocks of marble, there was indeed an external stimulus. This view of the abstract marble pieces in combination with his psychological projection resulted in the vision of a potential human figure. The sculptural work turned abstract marble into human shapes and into otherly abstract matter: Nothing. This renders our task of unveiling the order which subordinates the abstract shape to the anthropomorphic one; a hallucinatory practice. That of looking into Nothing but seeing things. The effort to undermine the existing hierarchy and look at that-which-is-not-the-human-body as something else than a contribution to the depiction of the anthropomorphic shapes. In fact, the only direct relation to the abstract matter is that which victimizes *The Atlas*, and this doesn't empowers the punishment but rather refers to the fact that the image will live attached to the abstract matter, incapable of being liberated

²³ "...our own database of images" meaning the compound of images stored in our mind; these being personal memories, and more generally images we have consumed according to our background.

from the unfinished state. The dependence of the abstract part on the human figure transcends the visual realm, reaching the physical: if as a tumor, the anthropomorphic part was removed, the unity of the object would collapse.



Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Pietà Rondanini*, marble, ca. 1552-1564 the year in which the artist died.

Alexandre Nehamas - Living as a work of art.

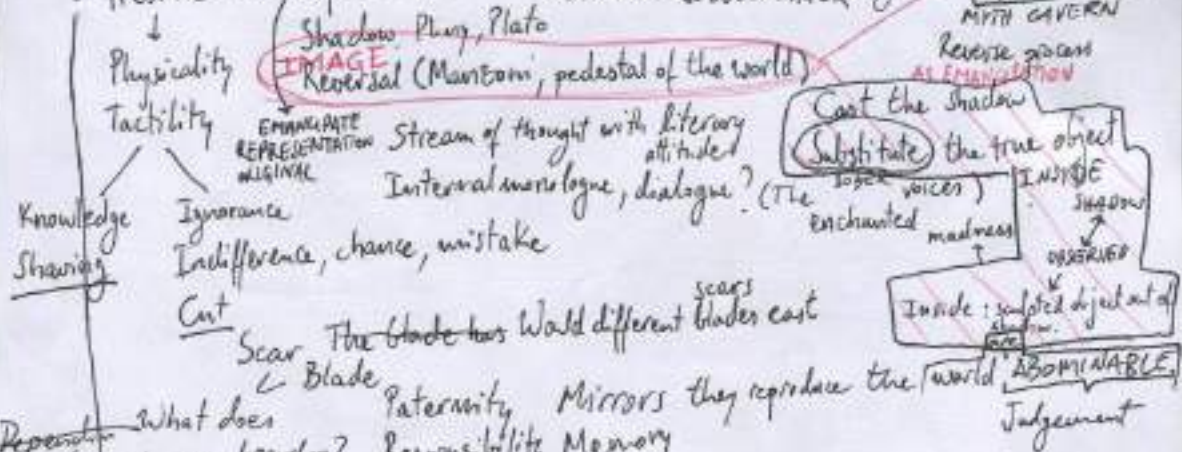
Chionera

Hans - Peter Feldmann

- Defy the idea of canon ↔ Hironir
 - Sleeping Hermaphroditus
 - 'In Search of Lost Time'
 - Cylinder with Razor Blades
- Introduction of Paradoxical Objects
- Analyse
 - Identify features that are undecidable or uncertain + develop

• Recognising a shape The possibility of being recognising something depends on the Habit, the culture that the beholder belongs to.

• Presence vs. Representation → Visual → Stream of thought
ABSENCE OF SUBJECT MATTER



Depends on what does the shape of a scar depend on?

To what extent does

Can we identify the trace of the blade?

Scar, second body in the genealogical line

DESIGNER → USE

• Non prescribed presence of the blades

Deconstruction

• Scar → to introduce the idea of representation

Absence of the trace (original) subject cut

THE SURFACE BEFORE BEING CUT

BLEEDING

Hidden / contained harmful? potential

Why then, Poets in Times of Misery? Conclusion.²⁴



Rogelio López Cuenca, *Decree no. 1*, galvanized steel and industrial paint, 1992. The title of the piece comes from the text *Decree No. 1 on the Democratisation of the Arts* published in the Moscow Futurists' *Futurist Gazette* in 1918, promoting the idea of the dissolution of the artistic activity in everyday life.

The terms “alienation” and “emancipation” have appeared numerous times throughout the thesis, perhaps too often, to not have been supported with background information that would clarify what these terms are actually standing for. Their use also does not account for what I intended by repeatedly referring to them. Both are different stages of nonconformity with the status quo. Instead of focusing on the materialistic aspects of this position, such as the political conditions causing alienation, I soon realized that the underlying force in my research was overshadowed by absurdity, thus making it hard to engage in an analytical exercises of that kind.

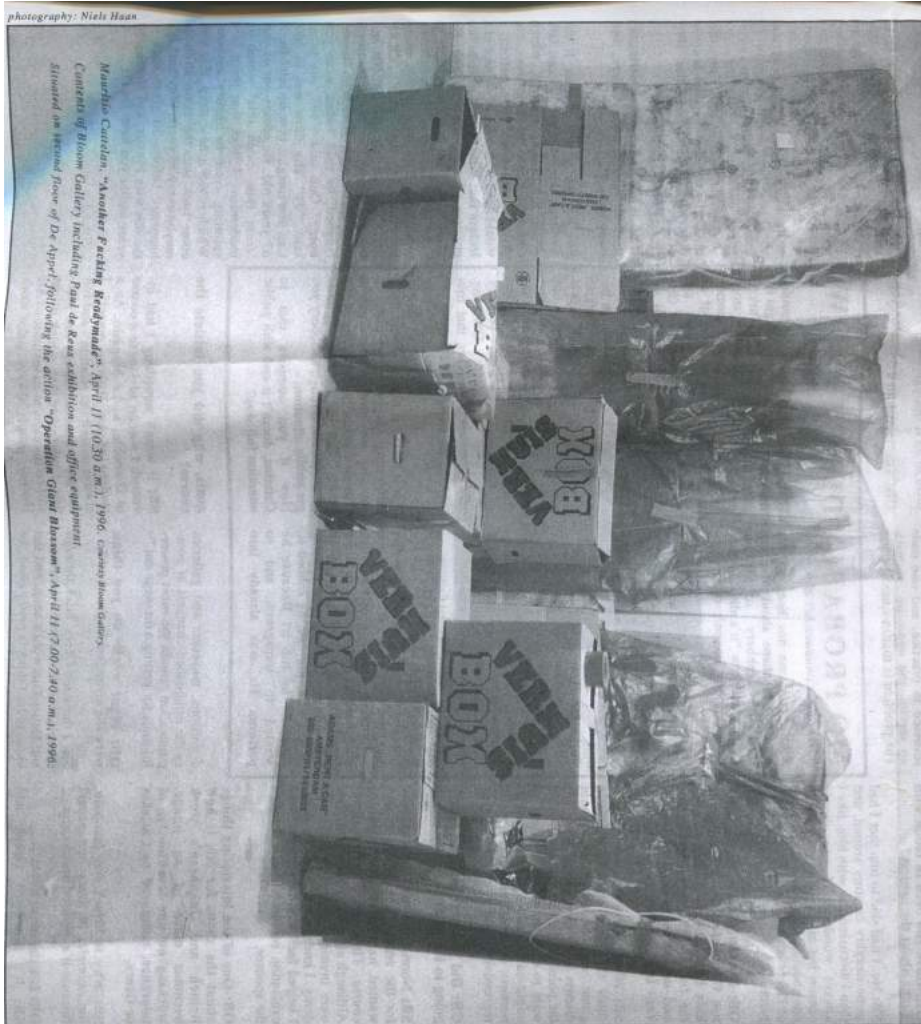
²⁴ The question “*Wozu Dichter in dürftiger Zeit?*”, or *Pourquoi donc des poètes en temps de misère?* (see the image above) or *Why to be a poet in times of misery?* was originally raised by the German poet Friedrich Hölderlin in his elegy “*Bread and Wine*” written ca. 1800.

Why then, be a poet in such times of misery? I experienced mixed feelings while writing from the position of an artist. I think it is unavoidable to be permeable to the problems around oneself. But the natural reaction to an error is to act consequently and try -at least- to fix it. In fact, specifying what the problem is, is the first step to seek for a solution. If we take a look at the general quality of the title "Is Reality a Mistake?", we can imply how absurd, contradictory and masochistic it is to have in mind the mistakes in reality and not make any effective effort of putting an end to at least one of them. The decision to choose a title according to its suggestive potential and not as a consequence of the research itself, was a sign of aestheticism; which is the confusion of the ethic with the aesthetic. I had to pay this error coming to terms with knowledge such as wondering whether reality was or was not a mistake. Without realizing it, I was dealing with notions of eternity and processes of limitation and suddenly I bumped into paradoxes, fallacies and sophisms. These figures became pivotal to my research in order to generate transitions among the states of perplexity, delusion and trickery. In a way the process could resemble that of having cut through the sources: If we look at the originals through the lens of this text, could these deviations conform a scar? What differentiates dissection (analysis) and stabbing (aggression) is the aliveness of the subject matter. A condition of being alive could perhaps be that of being in a constant organic process, or am I disavowing putrefaction? A corpse also continues mutating... But is it still capable of generating scars?

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[“Another fucking readymade” Maurizio Cattelan, De Appel, 1996]

Instructions: expose image to light for at least 45 seconds and then observe in absolute darkness.



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